



Benelux Meteor

Volume 22, Number 17

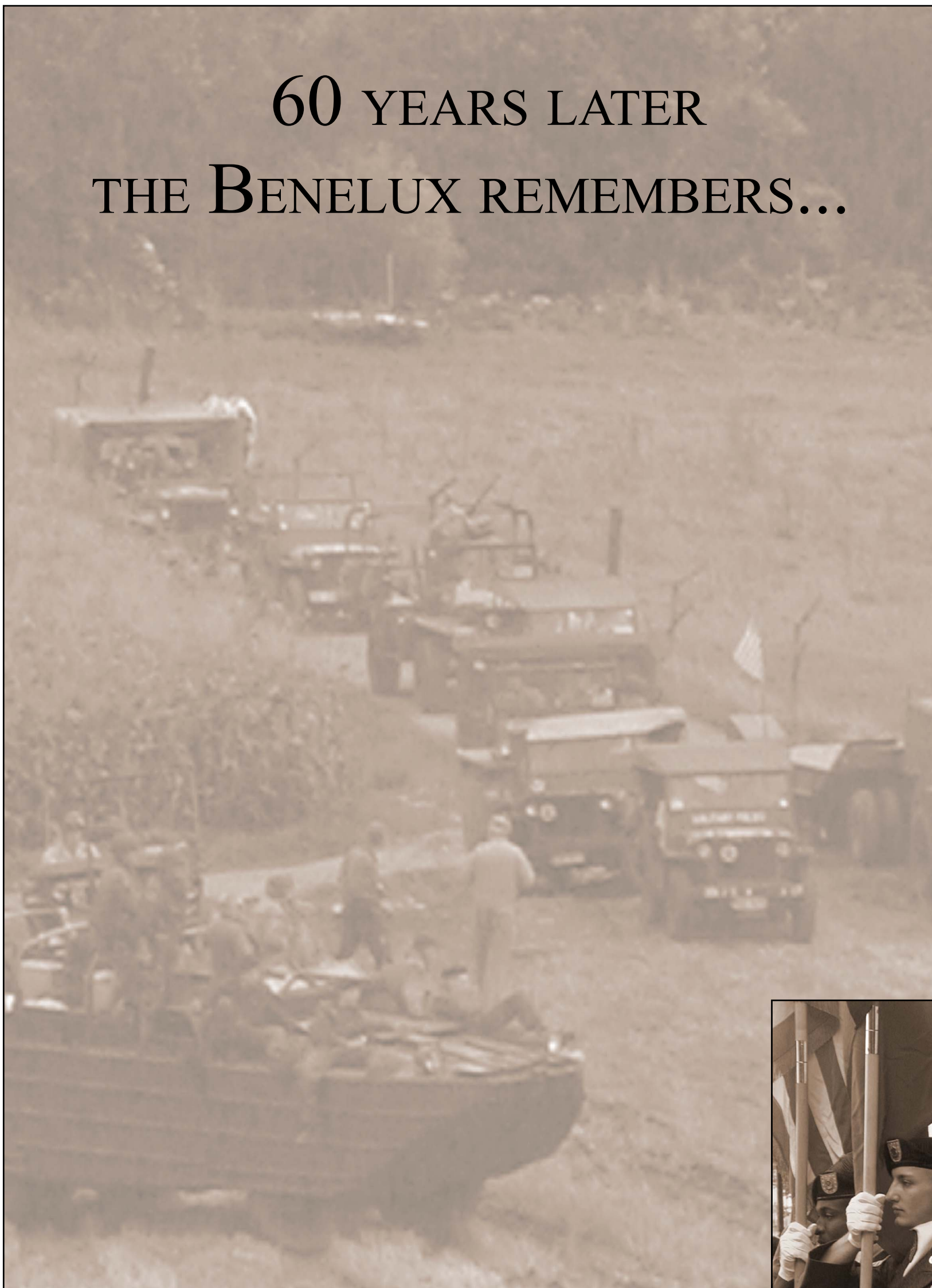
Published by the 80th Area Support Group

September 24, 2004

60 YEARS LATER THE BENELUX REMEMBERS...

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Although World War II did not end until May 8, 1945, the first Benelux towns and villages were liberated by the Allied Forces as early as Sept. 2, 1944. However, parts of the Benelux would continue to be under the Nazi jackboot until 1945 and suffered terribly during the winter of 1944 as battles raged back and forth until the German army was finally broken in January 1945.

The picture above shows a variety of military vehicles used in the annual "Tanks in Town" commemorating the liberation of Mons, Belgium, by the U.S. 3rd Armored and 1st Infantry Divisions. At right, the 80th Color Guard at ceremonies in Tienen, Belgium, Sept. 4

Nowowiejski Notes



Col. Dean A. Nowowiejski, 80th ASG Commander

Since my last column, we have completed a series of 60th Anniversary events commemorating the liberation of Belgium and Operation Market Garden in the Netherlands. Many of you enjoyed performances from the 76th Army Band, who played in honor of these events, and in commemoration of American sacrifices in

winter, and do not miss your historic chances to celebrate national memories.

School is off to a good start in our several locations, whether Brussels, SHAPE, or Schinnen. I congratulate you on your participation in the various information forums which were designed to present parents with the details they needed about the

these countries. I hope that you took advantage of the opportunity to thank the returning veterans of World War II who returned to honor their fallen comrades and partners in arms from our host countries. Please plan ahead as we look forward to the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge this

school year ahead. Please remain engaged in school support activities and athletics throughout the fall. Congratulations to the NATO Support Activity for their Information Fair and to the 254th BSB for their Strategic Planning Seminar.

I want to remind you to check the new and improved 80th ASG web page: <http://www.80asg.army.mil>. You will note some initial improvements, including useful links and an official newsletter that contains useful information from each directorate on upcoming activities. In the realm of other reminders, I ask that all U.S. civilian employees note that the open season for Federal Employee Group life insurance expires next week on 30 September. This is your first, and perhaps only, chance to enroll in this program in years, and you should give careful personal consideration to your

choice while you have the chance. See page seven of this publication for more details.

We need help in a couple of areas. First, I ask that each of you take special care to keep track of your government identification card. When you don't pay attention and misplace it, you cause a risk to everyone if your ID falls into the wrong hands. We do face an active terrorist threat in the Benelux, one that we should not ignore, and your ID card security is part of our protection against that threat. I won't publish the numbers of ID cards that have come up missing over the past 3 months, but suffice it to say, it is too many from my viewpoint as a Commander. Between thefts of wallets and people losing their ID, we just have too many ID cards lost. Please help to cut this down by paying more atten-

tion to what you do with your ID each and every moment of the day.

Second, the heating season is on us. Please review your occupant instructions and know how to operate your heating system. You should know how to light a pilot light and put your heating safely in operation. Avoid the temptation to keep your thermostat set to U.S. standards. Most of the heating systems in homes in the Benelux are not designed to keep your house at 80 degrees. They won't work at those temperatures. Besides, if you are in quarters, you will take U.S. funds that we could use for other purposes and send them up in smoke. Please help us to preserve precious assets for other purposes by being a knowledgeable consumer and a heat conserver.

Let's enjoy our chance to share in community with each other and our host nations as we journey into the fall season.

Marchers encouraged to sign up now for 60th Anniversary Bastogne battle walk

TERVUREN, Belgium – Expecting record crowds of walkers for the annual Bastogne Perimeter Pilgrimage December 18 because of the 60th anniversary of the battle, organizers of the march urge early registration by November.

Last year over 1,400 walkers showed up and the organizers exhausted its supply of participation certificates because many registered the day of the walk.

"This year we've ordered more certificates and we hope we have enough," said Tom Larscheid, who assists in coordinating American participation. "If you register and pay before Nov. 21, we'll be able to personalize your certificate with your name printed on it."

For the first time, three self-paced routes are offered, 6, 12 or 20 km. The walk officially begins at 8 a.m. on the town square near the Sherman tank but walkers may begin as late as 9:30 a.m. and still return to Bastogne in time for the afternoon ceremonies.

Late registration is at the tavern "L'Europa" on the town square from 7 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. on Dec. 18.

"The routes are well-marked and we have two rest stops at cafes where walkers can buy hot drinks and sandwiches," Larscheid said. "We will also offer free hot chocolate or soup at other breaks on the route."

The walk will be southwest of Bastogne this year passing through the village of Assenois where tanks of Patton's 4th Ar

mored Division broke the siege of the city on Dec. 26, 1944.

The walk, now in its 27th year, is led by 78-year-old Maurice Sperandieu, a veteran of the battle.

Sperandieu, who joined the Belgian army shortly after the country was liberated in September 1944, was attached to a MP battalion of Lt. Gen. George Patton's Third Army.

The cost of registration is 3.50 euro (no U.S. dollars or personal checks accepted) per walker. The fee includes walker's insurance, a certificate of participation and a small souvenir. The walk (not IVV sponsored) is open to everyone.

"Wear good water-proof walking boots and clothing and bring an umbrella," Larscheid advises. "The weather in the Ardennes can change quickly from rain and wind to sleet and snow."

Larscheid said for a small fee limited billets are available for active-duty personnel on a first come, first serve basis.

For pre-registration, Americans stationed in Germany contact Ed Laptosky at ed.germay@t-online.de and Americans in the Benelux contact Larscheid at sb325983@skynet.be.



For additional details on the walk call up http://users.skynet.be/bastogne_december_historic_walk/.

For a listing of special 60th anniversary events and displays running throughout the year in the town of Bastogne, check out www.bastogne.be.

Isles District Superintendent welcomes parents

As the Superintendent of the Isles District, it is my pleasure to welcome you as new parents to our SHAPE School Community. The teachers and administrators join me in saying we are happy to have you as parents. We also welcome back our parents from last year. Your continued interest and support of our schools are mutual benefits to the students we serve. For those of you who have deployed family members, we will continue to work with you to ensure that educators are sensitive to your child's needs.

We are very proud of our schools in the Isles District. We are especially excited about the new 26 million-dollar Lakenheath Middle School in the United Kingdom.

There truly is a yearly renewal in education. Students and staff members are all given fresh opportunities to renew positive relationships. There are new groups of students, new staff assignments, new activities, and new supplies and equipment. Parents are key players on the education team. By providing adequate rest, good nutrition, encouragement and support, parents are demonstrating that education is important.

Our schools in the Isles District are keeping current with new technology. The ability to use technology to access information is a necessary skill for today's student because without the information, they cannot be successful, contributing members of tomorrow's society. We are helping students realize their full potential by preparing them to be productive citizens in a complex and changing society. Education is now offering a wealth of challenges and oppor-

tunities you may never have dreamed of when you attended school—challenges and opportunities that are making a difference. As models of lifelong learning, teachers know change is a way of life. Required knowledge for the next century may not yet even exist today. Our schools challenge students by keeping expectations high and offering a wide scope of learning opportunities.

We will continue to focus on the Community Strategic Plan and the Isles District four goals: student achievement, effective leadership, infusing technology

across the curriculum, and staff development. "Math Matters" continues to be the theme for our schools.

Close cooperation between the home and school is essential to promote the best interests of all students. Parents are encouraged to visit the schools and to

attend scheduled meetings of parents and teachers. Mutual benefits accrue when there is a meaningful exchange of information between home and school. It is important to us that your child is successful in school. It is our hope that we can work together to promote high student achievement.

I encourage all members of the SHAPE community to seize the opportunities that are offered to make this new school year the most successful ever!



Linda L. Curtis

Linda L. Curtis
Isles District Superintendent
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The long bridge spanning the Maas River at Grave is now officially the John S. Thompson Bridge. The bridge fell in less than an hour after Thompson decided to assault it with his 15 men rather than wait for the rest of his company

Bridge named for 82nd AB platoon leader

Widow presented husband's helmet liner

Story and photos by Tom Larscheid

GRAVE, Netherlands—Sixty years to the day that her husband, 1st Lt. John S. Thompson, led 15 of his men in storming and capturing a bridge just outside the Dutch town of Grave Sept. 17, 1944, Phyllis Thompson returned to preside over ceremonies naming the bridge after her late husband.

"It was like a bolt out of the blue," Phyllis said of her initial reaction to an invitation to name the bridge after her

and end the war in 1944.

Thompson was awarded the Silver Star for his actions that day.

"I'm sure he would be so excited," Phyllis said of her late husband. "He would really have appreciated it. He really would."

The color guard at the bridge ceremony was provided by the 254th BSB, Schinnen.

The man responsible for suggesting naming the bridge and doing much

of the coordination with various towns and government officials, Sgt. Maj. Jacob Van der Gaast, 1st Engineer Battalion, Royal Netherlands army, said he got involved after a terrain walk of the battlefield.

"At my sergeant major course we went on a battlefield tour with an American sergeant major, Don Felt, an instructor at the school on combat leadership and military operations," Van der Gaast said. "At the Grave bridge he explained

the story of the 82nd Airborne and Lt. Thompson's capturing of the bridge."

Felt then posed a hypothetical question as to why the bridge wasn't named after these gallant paratroopers. That got Van der Gaast to thinking.

"The story of Lt. Thompson and his men kept running through my mind. That's when I started to re-



Sgt. Maj. Jacob Van der Gaast thought up the idea of naming the bridge after 1st Lt. Thompson

search and read books and stories on the battle," he said. "I started asking around to the mayors and others suggesting we name the bridge."

Van der Gaast said Felt's replacement at the NCO school, Sgt. Maj. Ron Macauley, was also a big help in researching and coordinating.

"This is the last opportunity to do something for the veterans. This is the last organized event for Market-Garden because the veterans are too old. What I've done is bring their stories back alive."

Van der Gaast also acted as personal escort for Phyllis Thompson and her family.

The Grave Remembrance Committee, chaired by Harrie Hendricks who vividly recalls watching the parachutes blossom out on that warm fall day 60 years ago, said this year is the last

official event although every Sept. 18 will be celebrated as a day of liberation for the citizens of Grave.

"Even though I was 20 in 1944, just like the vets, my age is catching up with me too," Hendricks said. "The first big remembrance we had was in 1989 but this looks to be the last time. I was very lucky to be liberated because I was scheduled to go to Germany to work in the munitions factories."

Committee member Jan Timmermans set up a temporary display in the town civic center, an old Dutch army caserne, marking events from German occupation of 1940 to liberation by the 82nd Airborne in 1944. He was amazed at the number of donations he received from local citizens.

"Some of the uniforms are on loan from museums but much of it came from private citizens," he said.



After the war Thompson traded his Army uniform for a Philadelphia Phillies baseball uniform.

Pointing to a faded Dutch flag hanging on a wall, Timmermans said someone brought it in just a few days ago.

"That's the original Dutch flag hoisted here on Sept. 18, the day of liberation," he said. "That's what makes history so interesting. It's the small details. Everyone has a story to tell and we must get them now while they're still with us."

But the biggest surprise for the Grave committee was Harrie Van der Mossehaaf who walked through the door one day holding Thompson's helmet liner. Thompson's initials were painted inside, and Timmermans verified it as authentic since no one else in that unit had the initials JST.

"He found it in a field near the village of Velp a few days after the fighting," Timmermans said. "It looks like an ordinary American officer's helmet until you look inside. He had kept it in his family for 60 years and this is the first time anyone knew about it."

Van der Mossehaaf presented the helmet liner to Phyllis Thompson on the condition that it remain in her family and not be sold or placed in a museum.

"This is the last commemoration," Timmermans said. "From now on it's all history."



First Lieutenant Thompson, 504th Regiment, E Company, 82nd Airborne Division

husband who died in 1988. "I think that it's so great that people here remember. Most of them probably weren't even alive during the war."

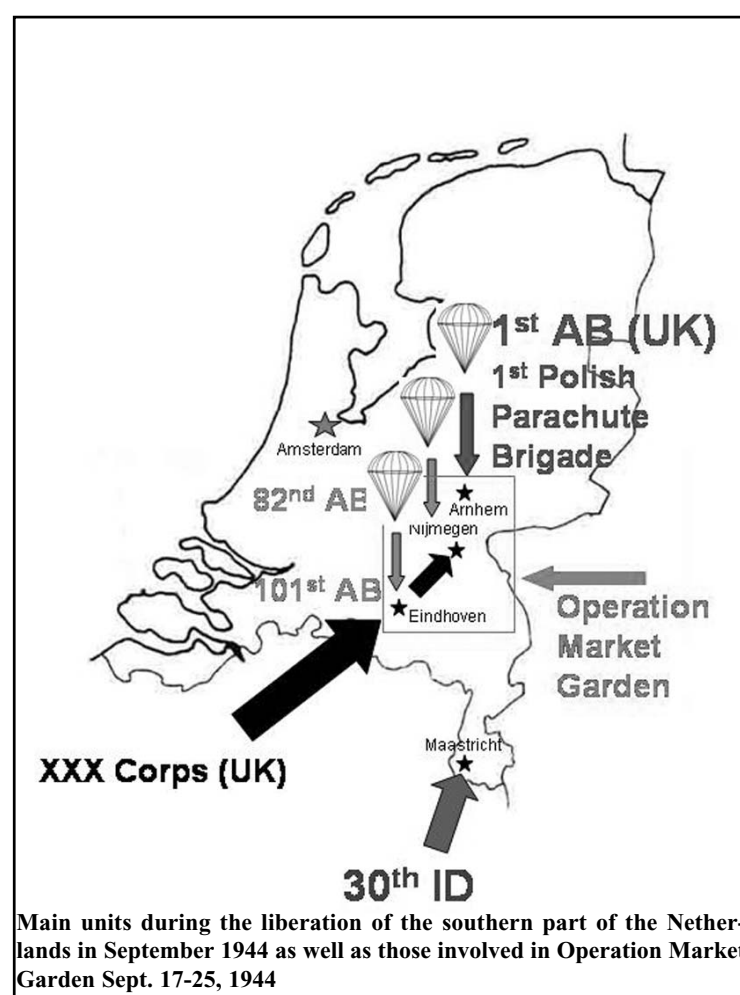
The dedication ceremony marked the first time she had been to the site where her husband decided to attack with only his platoon rather than wait for the rest of his company. His bold decision in capturing the nine-span, 1,500-foot-long bridge was critical to the daring Allied plan, Operation Market-Garden, which attempted to jump three rivers, turn the German army right flank



Jan Timmermans (right) shows Lt. Thompson's widow, Phyllis (center), markings on her husband's helmet liner. At left is the man who found the helmet Harrie Van der Mosselaaf. After keeping the helmet for 60 years as a souvenir of the liberation, Van der Mosselaaf presented it to Mrs. Thompson for safekeeping.



Inside the helmet liner brim the painted initials JST clearly stand out



Main units during the liberation of the southern part of the Netherlands in September 1944 as well as those involved in Operation Market Garden Sept. 17-25, 1944

60th Anniversary Ceremonies Commemorate

"(They) may walk with a little less spring in their step and their ranks are growing thinner. But let us never forget, when they were young, these men saved the world."

*Former U.S. President Bill Clinton
June 6, 1994
Normandy, France*

Story and Photos by Tom Larscheid

THIMISTER-CLERMONT, Belgium – Three World War II veterans of the First Infantry Division returned to Belgium this month to participate in 60th anniversary commemorative events.

Two of the men, Rocco Moretto and Bennie Zuskin, who served in the 26th Infantry Regiment from D-Day to the end of the war, were the only troops in their company to emerge from 11 months of close combat unscathed.

"Out of the original 219 men in C Company, we're the only two who landed in Normandy on June 6, 1944, and fought through five campaigns without being killed, wounded or captured," said



Rocco Moretto said luck and prayer got him through combat

Moretto, 80. "Naturally you have to be lucky but I think my mother's prayers were also a big help."

As a testament to the fierce combat the Big Red One went through, Moretto noted that his company turned over personnel four or five times during the war.

"I had close calls. Numerous, numerous close calls but I honestly can't recall them today," he said. "The last three weeks before the end of the war I had a terrific headache. Not knowing it then but now from my experiences in life, it was probably from the tension. When an old soldier got hit, he was usually killed. I guess that preys on your mind."

Moretto was the communications NCO for the company requiring him to up front with the radio for the company commander. A prime target but his number never came up.

"Although I didn't think about, it does something to you psychologically," he said of his almost constant exposure to enemy fire. "How we beat the Germans is kind of a mystery; they had better equipment than we did. But we out-gutted them. I really do believe that. The GI, the Doggie, had more guts."

Moretto said the infantry suffered frustrating shortages.

"Supplies never got up to us. We never got

enough socks and we went into the Battle of the Bulge with no winter equipment," he said. We got galoshes later but without the liners. We had all kinds of injuries like trench foot. Again, I was lucky."

Moretto fondly recalled the liberation of Liège.

"It was the greatest day of my life. The people welcomed us in such a manner that I've never forgotten it. We had a pretty good fight there but the civilians were out jumping on our tanks, giving us flowers; it is indescribable. I've always loved the people of Belgium."

Moretto's sidekick, Bennie Zuskin, had his share of close shaves including almost getting crushed by a supporting Sherman tank during a night attack. He claims he survived combat by keeping his eyes peeled for a ditch.

"I didn't care about the street signs or anything else. When they started to shell I wanted to make sure I had someplace to get in to. I hated to go down a road that didn't have a ditch," the 79-year-old said.

Both recalled a vicious four-day battle in Germany that left only 36 men standing in C Company.

"I know eight here (Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery) from my com-

Temporary military cemetery site finally recognized with memorial

Story and Photos by Tom Larscheid

FOY, Belgium – Thanks to the one-man efforts of Joël Robert, a native of the village of Foy and military history enthusiast, a memorial was dedicated this month commemorating a temporary American military cemetery where 2,701 fallen GIs from the Battle of the Bulge rested until 1948.



Joël Robert was the driving force in getting the monument

Robert, who collects American military equipment from the 1940s, was doing research in 1998 when he came across several photos taken in 1947 of a temporary cemetery in a rolling field just outside his village. His interest piqued, he began asking questions from old timers who remembered the cemetery.

"One of the photos showed a man cleaning a cross. I could see the name and serial number on the cross," Robert said. "He was Cpl. Homer D. Ricker, 35th Infantry, killed in action Dec. 31, 1944. I knew I had to find relatives of this brave man."

Robert located the daughter, Shirley, and son, John. Both attended the dedication ceremony earlier this month.

Mounting a campaign for recognition, Robert persuaded officials of Bastogne to fund the memorial.

"I wanted a memorial to remind everyone in Foy and the neighboring villages that there were GIs here who paid the ultimate price 60 years ago," he said. "I don't want them forgotten. Even though it was a temporary cemetery, it shouldn't be forgotten because they

were here."

Bastogne deputy mayor Jean-Claude Crémier told those gathered Bastogne could never forget those who won them freedom after four years of harsh Nazi occupation.

"You came and rescued your ancestral countries, even though it was not an easy task," he said to the warriors of 60 years ago. "Heroism is not an outfit bought in a store. It's made by the man who wears it. We are certain you hear us or maybe it's us who can feel your presence."

Ricker's son John said he has no memory of his father leaving as a replacement troop in the fall of 1944 since he was not yet two years old.

"I do have some photos, letters and remembrances of a man who loved his family, his church and his country. When he was called to serve, he, like thousands of others, answered the call. His death left a void in the Ricker family that can never be filled...I know that my father would be proud to know that we gathered here to remember them."

Robert plans to hold yearly ceremonies on every American Memorial Day in May or during the Battle of the Bulge activities in December.

The original cemetery held both American and German casualties; eight acres were reserved for Americans and 14 acres for Germans. The cemetery closed Aug. 22, 1948, after permanent American and German cemeteries were completed in the Netherlands and Belgium.



Photo of the cemetery in 1947

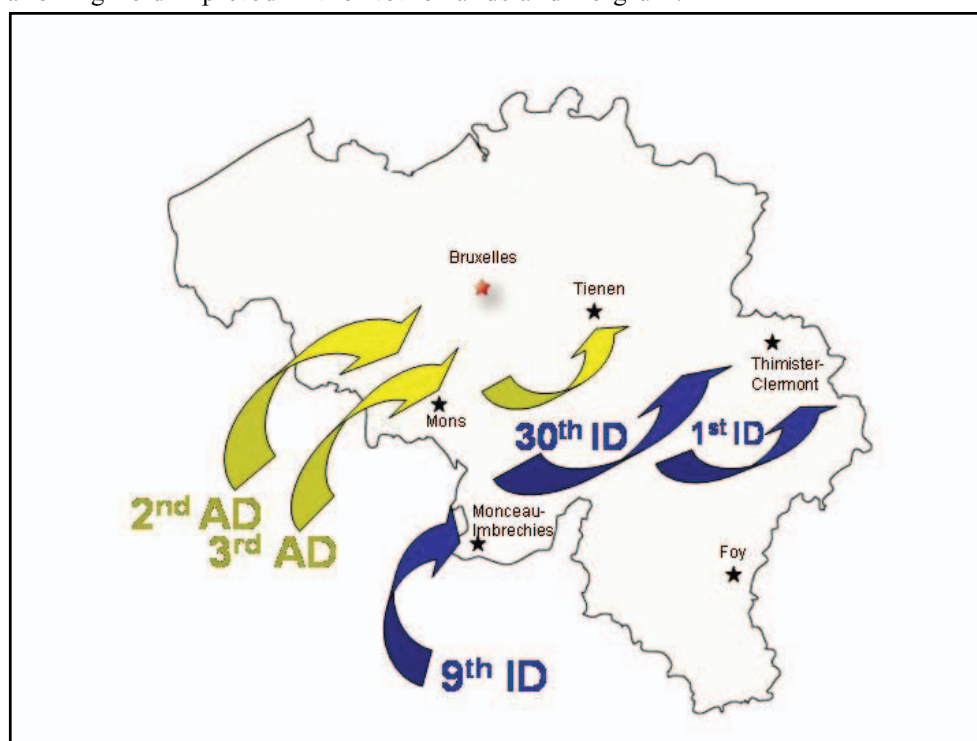
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The movement of the units during the Sept. 1944 liberation process



A finely restored M8 Scout Car winds its way through the narrow streets of Tienen



A 2nd AD veteran, personal thank, Tienen resident

Hell on
Liberati
voy roll
Belgium

Story and Photos by Tom Larscheid

Dozens of restored World War II vehicles accompanied by veterans dressed in GI kaki recreated the road to liberation towns earlier this month. The vehicles retraced the towns of Rumes, Tienen, Hasselt and Genk set 60 years ago by the 82nd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, 2nd Armored Division, Sept. 2, 1944.

The 82nd was the first unit to cross from France into Belgium. The scenes were re-enacted in the parade of vehicles by the German army invasion of May 10, 1940, and ending by the Americans. About 30 veterans from 2nd AD and the 80th ASG provided the color guard at Tienen.

Memorating the Liberation of Belgium

all battling their way through Belgium

pany. I think of them often," Zuskin said.

"I was just a young, scared kid," he said. "We liberated the Belgian people and they appreciate the Americans liberating them more than anyone else. And they prove to-day that they still do."

Although in the same division, Frank Vergo, 81, served in the 18th Regiment as a platoon sergeant in charge of two machine guns and three 60mm mortars.

"The experience at the age of 21, although horrible, stayed with me. It made me realize after the war when I was in industry as a manager, that there was nothing I could not face because of this experience."

Vergo said he was told his company turned over seven times from June 6 to Jan. 18, the day he was wounded and taken out of the war.

"After I was gone, I heard before they got to the Czechoslovakian border they had turned over two more times. That's roughly 1,800 either dead or wounded from just one company."

Vergo said that in his seven months on the front line, he had only two changes of uniforms.

"It's not that the quartermasters didn't know, they didn't realize any-

body could last on the line that long. Therefore the few of us that did, kept our same clothes. Admittedly, it wasn't nice."

Vergo recalled going to the rear for replacements only to find they had been either killed or wounded on the way up.

"This did not happen occasionally," he said. "I didn't know the men in my own squad."

A mortar tree burst mangled Vergo's left leg but the medic's were quick to get him off the front line.

"I was very fortunate," Vergo recalled. "When I came to I was in a barn and they had taken my field glasses, my 45 and I was fighting them. They said 'The war is over for you,' and I said, 'The hell it is, trying to grab my helmet.'"

After medication calmed him down, Vergo was moved to the operating room table where he remembers a dim 40-watt bulb glowing over him.

"There were two very tired doctors with three-day beards on their faces standing over me. I had a cigar in my pocket. I never smoked them but chewed them back then. I said if they saved my leg they could have the cigar. They tried to smile but they couldn't even force it they were so exhausted. It took me seven months to recover but my leg



Bennie Zuskin never, as he said, "got winged" during the war

was saved."

Vergo said he struggles as all combat veterans do often wondering why he survived while so many others didn't.

"So why am I here? That's a good question. Call it providence, I guess. The stress of war can get to you. Three days before I was wounded, it was the first time I really, really prayed as a desperate man; I began to cry involuntarily. When you have men, you don't cry. You can't lead with tears coming out of your eyes. In desperation I prayed to god either wound me or kill me. It didn't make any difference to me at the time, just get me off the line. Three days later my prayers were answered. Somebody kept me alive for a purpose. I've been very fortunate and thankful," he said.

Downed bomber crew, fallen 9th Infantry liberators remembered



SPC Scotty Needham, 76th U.S. Army Band, V Corps, plays taps for the fallen 12

Story and Photos by Tom Larscheid
MONCEAU-IMBRECHIES, Belgium – The Belgian-American Foundation held several memorial services this month not only commemorating the 60th anniversary of the liberation of this area of Belgium Sept. 2, 1944, but to recognize a downed B-17 crew as well.

The ceremonies began with laying of wreaths by a monument (a propeller blade from the four-engine bomber) where it went down near the village of

Macquenoise on Feb. 3, 1944, after being fatally hit by machine gun and cannon fire from two *Luftwaffe* fighters.

Two of the crew did not survive, the others, with the exception of the pilot, Capt. Howard Snyder and tail gunner William Slenker, were eventually captured. Three were executed. Snyder spent eight months in hiding and fighting with the French and Belgian resistance units.

Snyder's son, Steven, returned to represent his father and the rest of the crew.

"My father just turned 89 and he's just not well enough to travel," Snyder said. "On his good days he's sorry he couldn't be here but on his bad days he realizes it would be too much of a hardship. It's an honor to represent my dad and his crew and their families."

Snyder said his father didn't talk much about his war-time experiences.

"He really didn't open up much until he started coming over here for the celebrations. You could write a book or make a movie out of his experiences. It was just amazing what he went through. It's kind of hard to comprehend," he said.

Snyder plans to return to Belgium as often as he can.

"We were here for the 50th anniversary and I plan on coming every 10 years for sure and bring my sons so they can experience it too," he said. "It's really nice to see the people here. They are so nice and cordial. It's such a nice warm feeling from the Belgian people."

First GIs to fall

Just a few miles down the road from the B-17 memorial, 12 white representative headstones stand near a meadow where the first American troops to die on Belgian soil fell during a surprise mortar and machine gun attack.

Under the direction of Paul Delahaye, president of the Belgian-American Foundation, these 12 are always remembered. Every year he invites the 80th Area Support Group commander and color guard to participate in the remembrance services on Sept. 2.

"I decided I had to do something for these brave Americans," he said. "I began to write to American archives for information on what units were in the area and requesting casualty lists."

But the casualty lists were incomplete and Delahaye has only four names of the fallen. The remaining names remain lost to history.

This year Delahaye named his museum dedicated to the bomber crew and the infantrymen who died nearby "Museum 40-44 Lieutenant Cook" after one of the known killed in action. His attempt to find relatives of the officer have been unsuccessful.

"No one must ever forget their sacrifices," he said emphatically. "I'm willing to personally go to Washington D.C. or St. Louis – wherever there are records – to get the answers. It's the least I can do."



Near this memorial the first 12 American infantrymen died on Belgian soil during the liberation



veteran gets a thank you from a resident

on Wheels ration Con- rolls through m

companied by re-enactment of many Belgian and the route through the 60 years previously by 60th Armored Division on

into Belgium. Sixteen miles beginning with the ending with the arrival of and their families participating in a color guard for ceremonies



A 30th ID "Old Hickory" veteran raises the flag in honor of seven comrades who died at Limont on Sept. 8, 1944



V Corps' 76th Army Band performed at a number of ceremonies this month in Belgium

The Full Monty

On the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Brussels, Colin Lovelace looks at the enigma of Field Marshal Montgomery, a general loved by his men but detested by his superiors

Brussels celebrated the British soldiers who freed the city from German occupation 60 years ago on Sept. 3, 1944. For the citizens of Brussels, one figure came to symbolize their liberation: Field Marshal Montgomery, the commander of Allied ground troops during the D-Day landings and the leader of the forces that swept the Nazis from Belgium.

Whenever I pass Monty's statue on Avenue de Tervuren, I think of my father. He served in an Eighth Army tank unit under Montgomery in the North African campaign of 1942. My father spoke of him in glowing terms, as the general who instilled discipline in a failing army and who seemed to genuinely care about his men. In short, a hero.

While a research assistant working at Britain's Imperial War Museum in the 1970s, interviewing senior officers who had served with Montgomery, I came across a different impression of the man. He was detested by almost all the mainly retired cavalry generals. One told me that, while serving under Montgomery in Palestine in 1931, the Field Marshal's modernization plans for the Royal Warwickshire Regiment had caused so much dissent that senior NCOs had thrown his car into a canal. The general commented: "It was a pity he wasn't in it at the time."

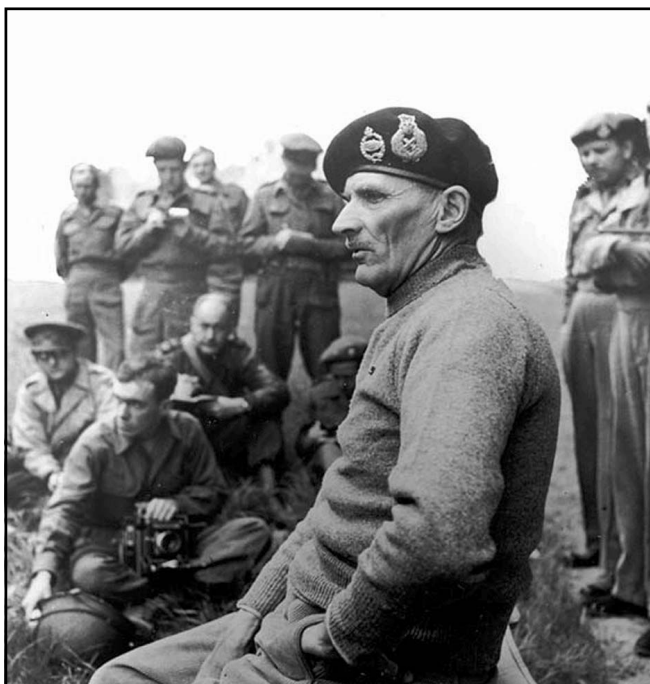
Why did this man inspire such passionate feelings? The simple answer is that Bernard Law Montgomery had always been a rebel, ever since his childhood in Tasmania, where his father was a bishop. He had spent six years there as a child, allowed to run wild and suffering vicious beatings from his tyrannical mother. Despite his conventional upper-class Edwardian background and later

What disturbed Montgomery most deeply was the army's failure to learn from its mistakes. As a front-line battalion staff officer at the Somme, this concern at the incompetence and callousness of a remote high command turned into contempt.

After World War One, Montgomery became obsessed with large-scale manoeuvres and being able to communicate to all ranks what was going on in battles. Such methods seem obvious today, but a great part of the officer class of the inter-war British army were more interested in traditional drills than battle practice.

But what really angered the establishment was Monty's insubordination. He had no time for the regimental pageantry of army life. Taking part in a parade once, he was reportedly told to move his men seven paces to the right. "Seven paces to the left", he barked out, and marched his men off the parade ground.

These antics did not endear Montgomery to the gin and tonic brigade in the officers' mess – he neither smoked nor drank – and neither did his brutal assessments of fellow officers. After he took over V Corps, one of his reports to his army commander General Auckinleck read: "The commander of the Royal Engineers in Portsmouth is completely and utterly useless. The CO of the Hampshire Regiment is a pathetic sight who should be removed from command at once." Of a fellow major-general, he declared: "He is in-



Field Marshal Montgomery's wild childhood left him with a distaste for authority.

to continue his rigorous training methods, Montgomery was also mourning his wife, Betty, who had died suddenly after an insect bite in 1937. Wracked with guilt and grief, he cut himself off from his relatives and even his young son David, who was brought up by relative strangers.

As with all revered generals, Montgomery had more than his fair share of good luck. He survived the carnage of the Western Front and narrowly escaped dismissal from the army several times, including once for establishing a regimental brothel – "horizontal refreshment" as he described it.

In 1942, luck again played its part when he was put in charge of the Eighth Army. Winston Churchill had not liked Montgomery. Over lunch in 1941, one story goes, Monty had boasted how he never smoked or drank and was 100 percent fit. Churchill, with cigar in one hand and a brandy in the other, replied that he smoked and drank, and was 200 percent fit. It was unlikely Churchill would have given him the command, but when the man he wanted, General Gott, was killed, Montgomery got the job.

When he took over in August 1942, the Eighth Army, stationed in North Africa to defend Egypt from the rapidly advancing German General Erwin Rommel, was severely demoralised. Montgomery set out to improve morale, telling senior officers that there "was much belly aching out here. All this is to stop at once. There will be no further talks or plans for withdrawal. We will stand here and fight. We are going to finish with this chap Rommel once and for all."

As Major-General de Guinand wrote later: "We went to bed that night with hope in our heart and a great confidence in the future of our army." This confidence spread, particularly after Monty had visited almost every section of the army assuring everyone that he would "knock Rommel for six".

And that's exactly what they did. In six weeks, Montgomery had transformed this cumbersome multi-national force, which had had plans to withdraw should Rommel's expected offensive succeed. The Eighth Army not only stopped the German general in his tracks, it effectively destroyed the legendary Afrika Corps. Allied losses were 13,000. Some 55,000 German and Italian soldiers died.

This success was Montgomery's launchpad for the Battle of El Alamein – one of the decisive battles of World War Two, which led to the German surrender in North Africa in 1943.

Montgomery was then appointed the commander of all Allied ground troops for the Normandy D-Day landings. But all this military success didn't soften his approach. After the landings, he became ever more

The proud Resistance

By Cleveland Moffett

On the morning of Nov. 9, 1943, Nazi-occupied Brussels woke up laughing. The daily French-language newspaper, *Le Soir*, seized by the Germans when they took over the city, was suddenly, inexplicably, filled with good news. Dispatches from the various European fronts were not only optimistic, from the Allied point of view, but positively comic. Something astonishing had happened overnight: the ersatz *Soir* had been rehijacked.

This unique newspaper was one of the most astonishing coups of the Resistance in Europe. In the end, perhaps inevitably, the printer, Ferdinand Wellens, was arrested and sent to Germany, where he died in a detention camp.

The story of the Belgian underground is told in vivid three-dimensional detail in the National Resistance Museum in Anderlecht. Here is the paraphernalia of the partisan and the saboteur: the guns, grenades and knives, as well as the radios, code-making and signalling equipment. As the war dragged on and the Occupation grew more oppressive, the clandestine press, both francophone and Flemish, thrived. Many of these publications together with much more Resistance memorabilia are on display in the museum.

The most famous and effective unarmed Resistance fighter in Belgium was Andrée de Jongh, the young woman who created the Comet Line, a meticulously planned escape route from Belgium over the Pyrenees to Bilbao that saved the lives of over 800 Allied airmen and soldiers. Captured and sent to Mauthausen, she survived and lived to tell the tale.

Then there's the other side of the story, familiar whenever a country is occupied: collaboration. As always, cooperation and opposition led to civil conflict. Guerrilla forces settled scores with selected acts of violence, in one incident assassinating the collaborationist mayor of Charleroi.

The National Museum of the Resistance, 14 Rue Van Lint, Brussels (Anderlecht), tel 02-5224041. Open 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. daily. Closed Wednesday.

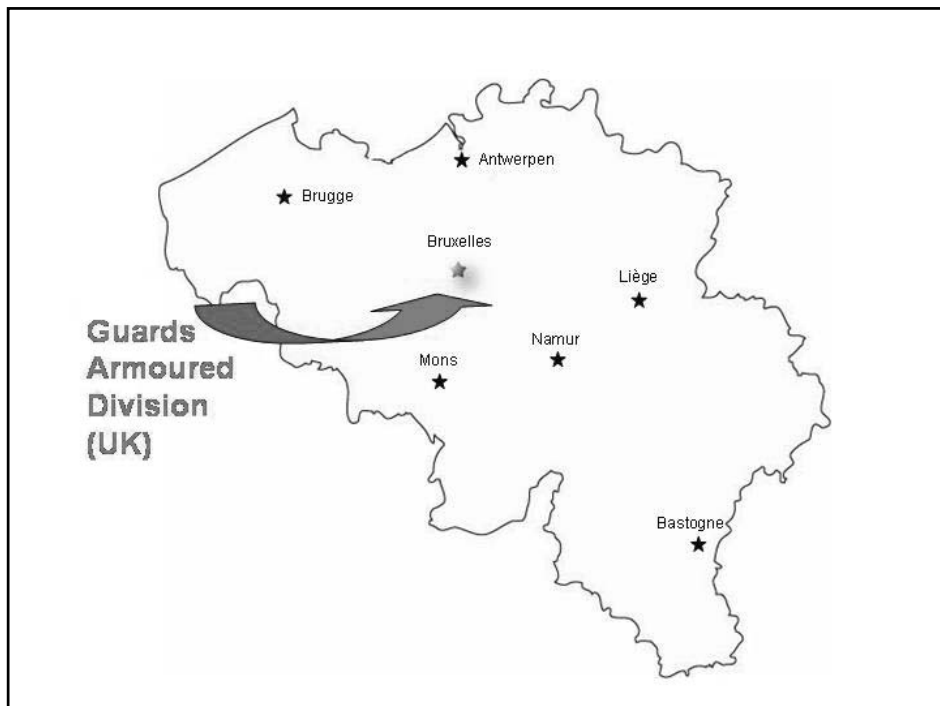
intolerant of what he saw as failing commanders, and was scathing to officers he felt weren't bucking up the troops' morale. There was no pity, even for old friends, men like General Charles Bullen-Smith, whose Lowland Division had done badly at Caen, and was briskly dismissed. Bullen-Smith was left broken and his friends never forgave Montgomery.

There lies the explanation for much of the antagonism the Field Marshal faced after the war. As the junior partner to the Americans in the Allied campaigns of 1944/45 he found it increasingly difficult to serve under senior officers like Eisenhower who, he believed, had been promoted above their capabilities. The relationship between the two men was, at times, icy. At one meeting in Brussels, Montgomery became so angry that Eisenhower said: "Now steady Monty, you can't speak to me like that. I am your boss."

He was still the rebel, but one who had defeated Rommel and was to take the German surrender in May 1945. After the war, Montgomery became even more difficult and boastful. Churchill said of him: "In defeat unbeatable, in victory unbearable."

At the end of the day, however, Montgomery had much to boast about – not least making the first decisive blow against fascism on the road to liberation and freeing Brussels.

Articles originally appeared in the Sept. 2 edition of *The Brussels Bulletin*. Reprinted with permission.



The British Guards Armoured Division, first to enter Brussels on 3 September 1944, was part of Field Marshal Montgomery's 21st Army Group.

schooling in St Paul's and Sandhurst, the influence of these early years would always leave Montgomery an outsider, uncomfortable with his fellow class-bound officers and more in tune with the ranks.

The wild, rebellious youth became an even more hardened critic of authority after fighting on the Western Front in World War One. In 1914, his battalion commander at Mons fled and surrendered to the Germans, forcing the young second lieutenant to beat a hasty retreat through enemy lines.

He led a brave charge at Meteren, but then took a foolish risk, which led to him being shot and to the death of the young soldier who had run out to help him. He lay for several hours with the dead soldier on top of him before being rescued. Never again would Montgomery take unnecessary risks.

effective and is obviously extremely idle." Auckinleck hit the roof. Monty had overlooked the fact that the general had only recently relinquished command of the V Corps.

By June 1940, Britain was at war again and Montgomery was again frustrated at the failure of the high command to make adequate preparations. Posted to Belgium, he disobeyed orders to retreat in May, 1940, and remained with his Third Division at Louvain to defend Brussels from the advancing German army. But he was unable to save Brussels, was abandoned by Belgian troops and had to flee by night – something that would rankle for the rest of his life. He had trained his forces to retreat under darkness, which no doubt saved the lives of a hefty section of the British Expeditionary Force.

Furious at his superiors and determined

SHAPE and Chièvres Community Calendar

The **FEGLI 2004 Open Season** began Sept. 1 and will last until Sept. 30. This Open Season gives employees in FEGLI eligible positions the opportunity to enroll in the program or change their current FEGLI coverage. For more information, please visit www.fegli2004.opm.gov.

Hispanic Heritage Month

Sept. 28 **Hispanic Lunch** at the SHAPE military dining facility from 11:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m.

Oct. 5 **Food Tasting** at the PX from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. For information, call the Equal Employment Opportunity Office at DSN 361-5281

The **U.S. Navy Ball** is scheduled for Oct. 16 at 6:30 p.m. at SHAPE Officers' Club. Info and tickets: LI1 (AW) Thompson, DSN 423-5474 or YN2 (AW) Castillo, DSN 423-4177.

Army Community Service - The "*Cultural Adaptation Trip*" is on Oct. 9 from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Bus leaves at Bldg. 318, SHAPE. Trip includes visit of a cost saving warehouse, furniture store and food tasting. Sign up for this free trip at ACS, Véronique Hensgens, DSN 423-4332. The next *Newcomers Briefing* is on Oct. 14 at 8:30 a.m. at the Hotel Maisières - Free lunch provided. After lunch head out to Mons for "*Take the Bus*", an introduction to the Belgian Bus system. Sign up at DSN 423-4332.

BOSS - Upcoming *BOSS meetings* are on Oct. 7 and 21 at 1:30 p.m. at the SHAPE Community Activity Center. *BOSS Halloween Party* is on Oct. 30 at the SHAPE IC Club. Call DSN 423-4561 for more information.

Prime Time Lounge - *Country Night* on Oct. 9 at 8.30 p.m. and *Halloween Party* on Oct. 31 at 8:30 p.m.

Trips and Tours: *Haunted Paris Trip* on Oct. 30. Call DSN 423-3884 for details.

Outdoor Recreation - *Horseback Riding Trip* in Chaleux on Oct. 9 and *Deep Sea Fishing Trip* on Oct. 30. Call DSN 423-3884 for details.

Arts & Crafts - *Holiday Bazaar* on Oct. 9 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Handmade items for upcoming Holidays. For information,

call N-C Bland at DSN 423-4680.

The **SHAPE Property Disposal Office Sale** scheduled on Sept. 28 has been cancelled.

Fall Bazaar - The SHAPE American Schools PTSA hosts their annual Fall Bazaar on Oct. 16, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. and Oct. 17, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. at the SHAPE International School Cafeteria and Gym. All proceeds go to the PTSA to support our schools. For information, call Tammy Oluvic at 065.82.26.57.

The **Unit Level Basketball coaches meeting** will be held in the Main Gym conference room on Oct. 20 at 10 a.m. The season will begin on Nov. 9. For more information contact Cisco at DSN 423-3947.

Brussels Community Calendar

Army Community Service - The next *Newcomers Briefing* is on Oct. 19 from 8:45 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. *Hospital Tour for Newcomers* is on Oct. 20 from 9:30 a.m. until noon and *Newcomers Brief* is on Oct. 21 from 9:30 until 11 a.m. *Metro Madness Outing* is on Oct. 22 from 9:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. Call ACS at DSN 368-9783 to sign up.

Child and Youth Services - *Fall Festival* on Oct. 29 from 3:30 to 6 p.m. Call DSN 368-9639 for details.

Three Star Lounge - *Thursday Movie Nights*, enjoy free popcorn and the hottest box office hits. All Tri-Mission ID cardholders and accompanied guests 18 years and older are

welcome. For details and movie schedule call DSN 368-9732.

Community Town Hall Meeting is scheduled for Sept. 30 at 6 p.m. at the Community Conference Room, Building 2. Receive the latest community news and information and voice your ideas and concerns in the Open Forum. If you have issues you would like addressed at the town hall meeting, please send an email to Community.Coordinator@usdclmc.army.mil.

The **7th Annual Fall Festival** is on Oct. 29, 3:30-6 p.m., CYS followed by an all ages dance, 3 Star Lounge. Info: 02 717-9639.

Job Opportunities - *Bar Assistant*, NA-7405-2 (flex), open continuous position,

announcement number NAF-CHI-OC05; *part time Recreation Specialist* (youth activities), BA-0188-05/07, Host Nation announcement BEL-HN-04-053 under LN employment section. For information, call Jean-Luc Clarembau, 02 717-9735

Chapel - *Protestant Worship*, Sundays, 10:45 a.m.; *Gospel Service*, Sundays, 12:30 p.m.; *Gospel Sunday School*, 11 a.m., NSA Conference Room; *Sunday School* for all ages every Sunday 9:30-10:30 a.m.; *Men of the Chapel* meet the first Saturday each month at 9 a.m., NSA Chapel; *Protestant Women of the Chapel study*, Thursdays, 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m., Fellowship Hall. For information, call 02 717-9708.

Outdoor Recreation - Amsterdam Oct. 2, 7 a.m.-9 p.m., price \$40 adults, \$33 children; Antwerp Oct. 9, 8 a.m.-7 p.m., price \$40 adults, \$33 children. Info: Leon Dillien 0474 68 35 44 or 02 717-9775.

Education Center - University level math and English tutors needed; university level lecturers in management subjects needed for Advanced Skills Education Program; DANTES and CLEP exams available. Info: 02 717-9704. For more information on the Brussels Community events, you may visit www.brussels.army.mil.

254th BSB Local Calendar

Army Community Service offers great classes for new parents: *Infant Massage Class*: Oct. 5 and Oct. 19 at 10 a.m. at the ACS Conference Room., *Playgroup for Toddlers* on Oct. 7, 14, 21 and 28 from 9.30 until 11.30 a.m. at the Schinnen Sports Center. *OB Orientation and Prenatal Education Class* on Oct. 12 from 10 a.m. to noon at the Geilenkirchen Clinic, Conference Room. For details and to sign up for class, call DSN 360-7500.

Bowling Center - *Cosmic Bowling* every Friday at 6 p.m.

Call DSN 360-7207 for information.

Indoor Swimming Pool - Various instructional classes offered. Catered parties and special events are available for a nominal fee. Call DSN 364-3172 for details.

MWR BOSS Office - Next meetings are Oct. 14 and 28 at 2 p.m.

MWR Special Events - *Annual Trunk or Treat event* Oct. 29 from 5:30 until 7:30 p.m. Call to reserve your vehicle or table space at DSN 360-7451. Decorate your space and bring lots of candy for the children. Prices awarded to "Best decorated Trunk". There will also be an

MWR haunted house and organized children's activities. Later children in costume bowl free at Cosmic Bowl from 6 until 9 p.m.

Geilenkirchen

Foggy Fields Bazaar - The American Women of Geilenkirchen will be hosting their annual Foggy Fields Bazaar Nov. 12-14 in Hangar 4 at GK NATO Base. Open to all NATO and US ID card holders Friday, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. and Sunday, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.


It's your Future.

VOTE

for it!


The general election is Tuesday Nov. 2nd.

For information on how to register please visit the Federal Voting Assistance website: <http://www.fvap.gov> or contact your unit Voting Assistance Officer at DSN 361-6225.



Benelux Meteor Deadline and Publication Dates							
Copy due (noon)	Print Date	Copy due (noon)	Print Date	Copy due (noon)	Print Date	Copy due (noon)	Print Date
Sept. 27	Oct. 8	Oct. 25	Nov. 5	Nov. 22	Dec. 3	Jan. 3	Jan. 14
Oct. 8	Oct. 22	Nov. 8	Nov. 19	Dec. 6	Dec. 17	Jan. 14	Jan. 28

About Us



The *Benelux Meteor* is the authorized unofficial Army newspaper published under AR 360-1 for 80th Area Support Group personnel. Editorial content is provided by the 80th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office and the 254th Base Support Battalion Public Affairs Office. Opinions expressed are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by the U.S. government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or the 80th Area Support Group. The *Meteor* is published twice per month. Circulation is 3,000. Our mailing address is Benelux Meteor, HQ 80th ASG, Unit 21419, Public Affairs Office, APO AE 09708. Telephone: DSN 361-5419; fax: DSN 361-5106; civilian telephone prefix: 068-27-5419. The country code for Belgium is 0032. Email address: meteor@benelux.army.mil

Policy

- We encourage letters to the editor, but they must be signed. We will consider withholding the name of the author upon request. Letters regarding an issue should contribute to informational interest.
- We reserve the right to edit all material for style, to fit available space, to resolve libel, safety or force protection issues and to correct grammar.
- Articles in plain text and separate photographic files may be submitted but publication depends upon the judgment of the editor. All submissions should be in electronic form as plain text. We cannot process information in documents such as PowerPoint, Excel or Acrobat.
- Event announcements must use civilian dates and times. Spell out acronyms and include a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. To save space, we cannot reproduce prepared flyers in the Meteor.

Advertising

- Messages from readers from profit and non-profit organizations which involve money exchange constitutes advertising.
- Neither the *Benelux Meteor* staff nor other public affairs personnel can accept advertising requests.
- The appearance of advertising, including inserts, does not constitute endorsement of the products or services offered. Everything advertised must be available for purchase, use or patronage, without discrimination.

- Any gambling or lottery requiring payment for chance cannot be advertised as stated in 18 U.S.C. 1302.

Deadline

Copy and photographs are due by noon 10 calendar days before publication date.

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Lt. Col. Richard S. Richardson	254th Base Support Battalion
Lt. Col. Jon M. Davis Jr.	NATO Support Activity

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Tim Biggs/Cis Spook	Lay out

Local Americans tell of Word War II ties to Benelux

Father survives vicious fights at St. Vith

Lieutenant Colonel Scott Glass recently reported for duty with the 80th Area Support Group at Chièvres, Belgium. It is not, however, the first time a representative of the Glass family line has worn a United States Army uniform in Belgium. Lt. Col. Glass' father, Royce Glass, found himself a somewhat reluctant tourist in Belgium during World War Two in December 1944 and January 1945.

Royce served both as an infantryman and communications specialist with the 3rd Battalion, 345th Infantry Regiment. His division was the 87th Infantry Division, nicknamed the "Golden Acorns."

The 87th Infantry Division fought in Belgium around the towns of Libramont, Moiricy, Vesqueville, Tillet, St. Vith, and Schoenburg, just to name a few. Royce remembers his service east of St. Vith during the Battle of the Bulge as being particularly tough. The winter was the coldest on record in that part of Europe in 100 years.

"Besides the worst cold and snow and ice I have ever been in, we had to fight and beat the best soldiers and best equipment the German army could throw against us," he said.

He remembers one instance in particular in the hard fighting around St. Vith.

"We were fighting down this paved road. I was following my battalion commander Lt. Col. Moran with a fine reel of telephone wire on my back trailing out on the ground. Whenever we stopped, I would splice into the line and hand the telephone handset to the battalion commander so he could talk to headquarters.

"Well, the Germans hit us with an accurate mortar barrage. We all dived into the ditch as the shells kept coming in. I looked out in the road and I could see where the explosions had cut the wire. I crawled out in the road into one of the shell holes and pulled in the two raw ends of wire behind me to twist them back together.

"All this time shells were exploding and Col. Moran was yelling to me to get back in the ditch. He was screaming and cursing. Let me tell you he had a very loud voice and said every curse word I knew plus some that I didn't.

"After I repaired the break in the wire I jumped back in the ditch next to him, called up our headquarters, and handed him the telephone. He called for some artillery fire and that stopped the enemy shelling. He turned to me and told me that he had cursed me for going out in the exploding shells, but that he had not cursed me for fixing the wire."

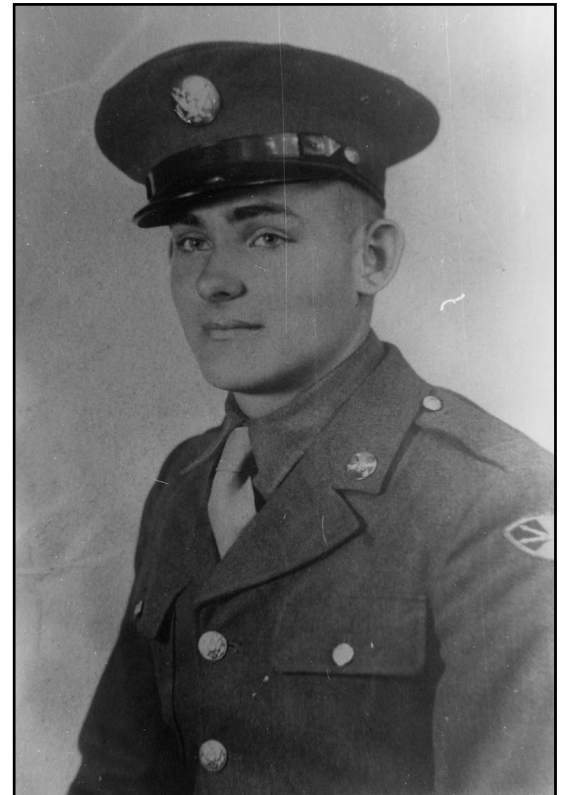
The Belgium "vacation" for Royce Glass ended in late January 1945 when the 87th Infantry Division continued its attack into Germany. He did not return to Belgium until 52 years later in 1997 when he visited his son, Scott and his family on active duty in Europe. Touring the old battle sites where he served as a 22-year old Soldier brought back a lot of memories.

The elder Glass plans another trip to Belgium soon.

"Now that my son is back over there, I am planning to visit him, his wife, and my grandsons. I am 81 years old now and I need to get that done before too much longer," he said.

Did he like his time in Belgium? "Well, the fighting kept me from enjoying it as much as I wanted to. My visit in 1997 was much better, and I expect I will enjoy my next visit, too."

"I am very proud of my father's World War II service in Belgium. My sons are extremely proud of him, too. We are enjoying living here, and it is a very special thing to us all to know that my



Royce Glass, 22 years old, during the Battle of the Bulge.

father helped in some way to liberate Belgium," his son added.

Note: Lt. Col. Scott Glass is the DPTMS director for 80th ASG, Chièvres, Belgium.

Crossroads in Time

By Lt. Col. David A. Shultz

Recently, when I was returning to Brunssum, the Netherlands, after a weekend trip to Ramstein Air Base, Germany, I swung up through southern Belgium near the town of Bastogne to show my wife where my father's B-17 bomber came to rest after being shot down during a mission to Frankfurt, Germany on March 2, 1944.

As we crossed over an intersection near the border town of Martelange, I pointed out this was the very crossroads my father actually landed on after he bailed out of his crippled bomber at a very low altitude that day.

It was a bad day for my father, Lt. Eugene Shultz, from the start.

A B-17 pilot assigned to the 381st Bomb Group out of Ridgewell Aerodrome, England, he was on his 18th mission, just seven missions shy of that magic 25th mission and a ticket home. Shortly after assembling with the rest of the formation over the English Channel he lost an engine due to mechanical failure. He could have aborted at that point, but decided to try to stay with the formation and complete the mission.

They reached the target area okay, but were

bomber and decided to try to make it to the English Channel on just one engine. The waist gunner, Staff Sgt. John T. Farr, remained onboard to assist. It was more of a controlled glide as I understood it, and two of the engines were "windmilling" causing excessive drag. After crossing the Luxembourg - Belgium border, the last remaining engine caught on fire due to excessive power, and my father and Sgt. Farr bailed out.

My father came down on the crossroads previously mentioned and was quickly aided by Belgian civilians to hide from the Germans. The waist gunner came down on a tree in a densely wooded area and wasn't found until later by the Belgian underground. They were reunited and hid away in a small wooden cabin deep in the Ardennes forest.

About a month later my father tried to make his way to Switzerland via France, but he was picked up by the Vichy French at a railroad station in Nancy, about halfway there. Turned over to the Germans, he ended up in Stalag Luftwaffe III and spent most of the rest of the war there. The waist

gunner, Sgt. Farr, had better luck. He left a month later with some downed RAF crewmembers and actually made it to Switzerland and eventually back home to the states.

One of the highlights of my career was during my tour at Florennes Air Base, Belgium, about 20 years ago. I actually met some of the Belgians who aided my father. I'm grateful I had the opportunity to thank them personally for

putting their lives on the line to not only protect my father and Staff Sgt. Farr, but all the other allied crewmembers they assisted who were fighting valiantly to save Europe.

Note: Lt. Col. Shultz (USAF) is presently assigned at Headquarters Brunssum as chief, HSG Morale and Welfare.



My father, Lt. Eugene Shultz, is on the bottom row, second from the left. Staff Sgt. Farr is on the top row, second from the right.

hit by flak just after they released their payload. The flak took out two more of the four engines and the plane started spinning slowly earthwards and away from the formation. At that point he ordered "abandon ship" and eight of the ten crewmembers "hit the silk". Most were captured immediately after landing.

My father was able to regain control of the

My own Battle of the Bulge Hero

By Jacqueline Kilduff

Private Antone "Tony" T. Struntz arrived fresh from basic training at Neufchateau, Belgium, on Dec. 18, 1944, his 23rd birthday, to join the 80th Infantry Division, 319th Regiment, Company I.

They left Neufchateau on "40 and 8's" (train cars that held 40 men or 8 horses) and detrained in Luxembourg City for one night. On Dec. 20, after marching to Steinsel just to the north of Luxembourg City, Tony and a few other Soldiers made time to go to church.



Private Tony Struntz

The next day they marched on to Colmar Berg to find piles of bloody equipment and uniforms in the castle courtyard. Tony knew "he was in for it then."

At 4 a.m. Dec. 23, Company I and the 319th, were ordered to attack Heiderscheid.

Why did Patton want this tiny village in Luxembourg? If the Americans could control Heiderscheid, they could control one of the main supply routes the Germans were using to attack Bastogne.

The Germans counterattacked throughout the day, but the 319th held the town. Before sunup on Dec. 24, the Germans attacked again. Thousands of German Soldiers in their winter white uniforms began streaming across the fields into town like so many ghosts. The 319th Regiment was outnumbered three to one. It was an ugly day filled with bitter hand-to-hand combat. Merry Christmas.

Tony carried a carbine and a bazooka. His loader was a man named "Smitty." In a shell hole, not far from the German panzers, Smitty said to Tony

"Let's go get us a silver star!" Smitty grabbed the bag of bazooka rounds jumped out of their hole and vanished with a loud bang.

They never knew what hit "Smitty" and they never found him. Eventually the 319th, about to be overrun, made the difficult choice to call artillery in on itself. Shells rained down devastating the German forces caught in the open. Many Americans suffered the effects of friendly fire that day, but the 319th endured. They drove the enemy out and Heiderscheid was never again in German hands.

Tony, after an especially nasty fight at Heidersheidgrund, which left almost all of Company I dead or wounded, ended up in the village of Dahl. During the fighting around Dahl, Tony dove for cover into a store that had its back wall blown out. He flung himself under a shop counter where he discovered a basket of frozen apples. A German tank pulled up in front of the store and proceeded to fire its main gun straight through the shop, over Tony's head, and out the back of the store.

After the tank had moved on, Tony made it a point to eat those apples! On Jan. 14, 1945, the Germans began heavily shelling the village of Dahl. Tony was cooking food in his helmet when the surprise barrage began.

Again, he dove for cover, but then went back for his helmet. He was hit by shrapnel which gave him what the official Army report called "a penetrating wound of the right chest." (The real details were far more gory.)

Loaded on to a jeep within two minutes, in the freezing temperatures, while the unit was still under fire, he was carried to safety. Amazingly, he remained awake through the whole event. Tony was sent to a hospital in England and then home to the United States aboard the original Queen Mary ocean liner.

After recovering from his wounds at Camp Picket, VA, Private Struntz was discharged on July 19, 1945. He went from basic training, straight into 30 days of intense combat, to the hospital, then home and out of the service in six months! Shortly thereafter, he met and married Estella Zhilman. They had their first child, my mother, born December 17, 1946.

On Dec. 7, 1992, my grandfather, Antone T. Struntz, passed away after a battle with cancer. We never once heard him complain, because I suspect battling cancer was nothing compared to a place called Heiderscheid.

Antone Struntz, my grandfather, my hero.

Note: Jacqueline Kilduff is the SHAPE Entertainment director.